DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 432 EA 009 356

AUTHOR Passow, A. Harry
TITLE High School Reform: Current and Historic Perspectives.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, N.Y., April 4-8, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Educational History; *Educational Problems; Futures (of Society); *High Schools; Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

This paper commences with a brief history of reforms in secondary education and the studies of various groups that inspired them. Despite almost a century of criticism and reform proposals, the high school continued until this decade to be a highly regarded community institution. Reflecting the present loss of prestige suffered by high schools, current criticism of secondary education ranges far and wide. A few areas of current concern include the apparent decline in student achievement, the inadequacy and inappropriateness of curricula, and the isolation of the high school. This paper summarizes current trends in recommended educational reform and examines the future of secondary education. (Author/DS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED136432

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AERA SESSION 24.01

HIGH SCHOOL REFORM: CURRENT AND HISTORIC PERSPECTIVES*

A. Harry Passow
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, New York 10027

In examing current and historic perspectives of the high school, one can draw on several sources: an historical analysis of the evolution of the American secondary school and the forces which shaped its development over the past century; an analysis of some eight or ten reports issued during the past five years which detail the shortcomings of schools, examine the nature and causes of the problems of educating and socializing youth, and propose policy and program changes which, if implemented, would alter the future of the high school as well as other youth-serving agencies and institutions; and, finally, a personal crystal ball whose prognostic capabilities must be generously mixed with hope. For this paper, I have drawn on the analyses used in preparing the Teachers College Sachs Memorial Lectures titled, Secondary Education Reform: Retrospect and Prospect.[1]

Since the report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies in 1893, we have had a steady stream of committees, groups, and individuals which have been critical of the purposes, practices, and achievements of the American high school and have consistently pressed for reform and a reshaping-- some major and some minor. Although some of these reformers took cognizance of societal forces impinging on schooling

*A paper prepared for the America Educational Research Association meeting in New York City. April 7, 1977.

EA 009 356

and socialization, most focused on the schools' functioning almost in isolation-- always acknowledging, of course, that schools were supposedly a reflection of society. This acknowledgement came usually in the statement of purposes or the goals of secondary education. In its report, the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, for example, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education declared that all education should be guided by a clear conception of the meaning of democracy: "Education in a democracy, both within and without school, should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward nobler ends."[2] During the Great Depression of the 1930s, various commission reports were much more sensitive to schools in society. The American Youth Commission's study, Youth Tell Their Story, for instance, presented a picture of the conditions and attitudes of some 13,528 Maryland youth who perceived that the schools and the economic structure had failed to meet their needs.[3] There was pervasive dissatisfaction with schooling in general and particularly with the vocational training and guidance provided. The study showed that the schools had failed to serve as vehicles for social mobility-- socioeconomic status, race, and sex were the outstanding factors that affected the amount of schooling youth received. The Commission called for vigorous action in the areas of education, employment, and recreation as elements of a national program of constructive and profitable activity for youth.

In the post-World War II period, at different times reformers have called for changes in curriculum, guidance provisions, and opportunities for work experience which would provide youth with "the life adjustment

they need and to which they are entitled as American citizens;"[4] for a return to the basic disciplines by focusing education on systematic intellectual training; for greater attention to the academically talented and the highly gifted in order to better meet America's needs for trained brainpower; for new curricula, organization, technology, teacher training, and for personnel deployment patterns which would contribute to the national security (the first piece of major legislation was called the National Defense Education Act); for more adequate and appropriate provisions for various racial and ethnic minority groups, children of the poor, and urban populations; and, most recently, for a reassessment of the goals, structure, operations, and control mechanisms in the high schools to attain greater relevance and create more humane conditions.

Despite almost a century of criticism and proposals for reform, the high school continued to be a highly regarded community institution, as American as apple pie and baseball. Until this decade, it was an integral part of a growth industry and the institution which provided the last contact with formal education for a majority of the population. And, although changes had occurred, the American high school was described as unchanging, static, and unbending. With a captive population, its professionals presumably saw no need to change. Former U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland, however, saw the high school in 1972 as "a troubled institution and the most likely arena of educational change for the balance of this decade. While there is dissatisfaction, frustration, and readiness for change throughout all education, the opportunities for reform are especially timely in high school."[5]

The current criticisms of secondary education-- the bases on which proposals for reform-- range far and wide. The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education ("Brown Report") observed:

> The American comprehensive school today must be viewed as an establishment striving to meet the complex demands of society in the throes of social change, at a time when the school system has become too large an institution and is literally overrun with a mix of young people from inconsistent social backgrounds. This is a difficult circumstance. The pressure of these forces exhausts the strength of the high school as an organized institution.[6]

The National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education ("Martin Report") noted:

> . . . increased public awareness that the high school, as an institution, is not merely inappropriate for a growing number of students. It is increasingly ill-matched to many, possibly a growing majority, of its present adolescent population who are either too old or too mature to live under the routine controls and strictures of a large high school without serious disturbances to them and to the school.[7]

The Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee ("Coleman Report") expressed as its basic premise the notion that the school system offered only an incomplete context for the accomplishment of many important facets of maturation. The report pointed out:

> Signs of dissatisfaction abound from parents and taxpayers who have an inarticulate sense that something is amiss, from school administrators and teachers who are experimenting with methods and objectives and forms that differ from those of the established system, and from youth themselves, many of whom are showing individual initiative in the search for extra-curricular experiences.[8]

Smith and Orlosky commented on the situation in which youth are segregated and isolated from adults in the significant areas of social functions and view the situation as "the breakdown of the processes of socialization resulting in an increasing dissipation of the productive potential of youth and their moral fiber. The youth of all social classes, of the cultural majority no less than the minorities, are being squandered

in idle dissipation, assigned to martyrdom by isolation and monotony."[9]

Maurice Gibbons, writing for the Phi Delta Kappa Task Force, pinpointed as the crucial issue in secondary education the question of "how to promote the successful transition of youth from childhood and school to adulthood and the community."[10] Gibbons observed that the transition from school to life as a fully functioning member of society is jarring as school simply ends. He noted:

> It is possible for [students] to graduate, even to graduate with honors, and be unprepared to choose their work, function in a job requiring special skills, manage their personal affairs, choose a partner and establish a family, form relationships, work cooperatively in formal and informal situations, meet responsibilities as citizens in local, national, and international affairs, or continue learning on their own. They may have little or no idea of what they can do, of their capabilities for productive activities acknowledged and respected by society. And they may have few resources for, or experiences with, facing obstacles, solving problems, and overcoming difficulties which can litter the path of adult life. Schools cannot prepare students so that they will move effortlessly into fully functioning adulthood, but the chasm can be removed. And equipped with experiences, knowledge, and skills, young persons can be prepared for the struggle to become themselves and fully functioning adults and citizens.[11]

Describing the American high school as "the most absurb part of an educational system prevaded by absurdity, "Gross and Osterman, along with a number of other radical critics, scored the schools for their irrelevance, their racism, and their authoritarianism: "There is no real regard for the students as individual people, with real concerns of their own and inherent drives to know, understand, and create."[12] A representative national cross-section sample of 1,000 thirty-year olds who had been studied periodically since 1960 as part of the Project Talent population identified seven "glaring shortcomings" in the secondary education which they had received: grossly inadequate vocational guidance, too many

harmful teachers, lack of individualized instruction, inadequate curriculum, too few alternative ways to learn, and ineffective education for citizenship in a democratic society.[13]

There are many areas of concern and criticism of today's secondary schools which have implications for the future. To list just a few:

-- The inadequacy and inappropriateness of school curricula which are so characterized both for omissions and commissions. Emphasis on traditional subject matter or life skills curricula, on cognitive or affective development, on academic or social learnings--each focus is criticized depending on the varied conceptions of what the mission of the secondary school is or should be. The Martin Report sees the high school as being burdened with more and more obligations: "Educators have abetted this process of curricular accretion through a rather innocent assumption that the school unilaterally (assuming a cooperative family) would reshape personalities, mold attitudes, raise ambitions, train skills, and impart knowledge in settings severely out of touch with other educational forces, including the media and the peer culture."[14] Others have criticized high school curricula for a curriculum which is too constrained and barren.

-- The apparent decline in achievement as manifested in the nation-wide drop in various test scores. The concern with the steady drop in SAT and ACT scores of college applicants has been the subject of much study and speculation. More improtant, however, has been the introduction of legislation and regulation for state- and system-wide minimal competency testing designed to insure basic

levels of performance for a high school diploma.

-- The quality and performance of the teaching staff. Not only is the nature of initial training and continuing education being debated-- this has been the focus of perennial discussions-- but the absence of accountability and the growing organizational strength and exercise of power gained through collective bargaining agreements and political alignments are also concerns.

-- The inadequacy of vocational and technical education programs. The quality of vocational and technical education programs even for that minority of the secondary school population which has access to them continues to be questioned. The incomplete development of the notion of career education has not yet made possible a valid testing of the concept for the youth population generally.

-- The serious questioning of compulsory attendance laws. When truancy is now coupled with the newer phenomenon of rampant cutting of classes, the problem is confounded. It is being argued that compulsory attendance laws are either not enforceable or that the cost of enforcement is too great. The Brown Report argues that the "coercion of compulsory attendance" is no longer defensible and must be removed so that the high school is no longer simply a custodial institution.

-- Isolation of the high schools. Secondary schools are perceived as isolated from other youth serving, educating, and socializing institutions and agencies so that the impact of experiences in these non-school settings is not purposefully related to those

under the guidance of the schools.

-- Program inflexibility and lack of individualized instruction. Despite perennial rhetoric concerning individual differences and the need for differentiated instruction, secondary schools tend to be programmatically inflexible, routinized, and even authoritarian. Whether such characterization is accurate or not, there are signs that youth perceive them to be. The number of early graduates, for instance, tripled between 1971 and 1974 (from 2.2 to 7.7 percent) and colleges are increasingly making arrangements to attract youth prior to their completing twelfth grade. California now makes it possible for students to leave school early with a diploma by passing an examination and securing parental permission. Some 35,000 students took the examination the first time it was given. And, class cutting has become endemic in many schools. As one observer put it, "High school youth are commenting on programs with their feet; they simply are not buying what schools are offering."

This list of concerns and criticisms could be extended at length and, in fact, has been in the various commission and panel reports. The problems of the secondary school are now being compounded by a decline in the youth population attending them, a decline which follows a sharp increase during the previous decade. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of persons ages 14-24 increased by 52 percent (from 26.7 to 40.5 million); during the same period, the number of students from the age cohort expanded by 82 percent (12.9 to 23.5 million). Secondary schools had to absorb and teach larger, more diverse student bodies during a time when

there was enormous stress on and by youth and various societal institutions. The anti-draft, civil rights, and anti-establishment movements of the period actively involved youth who were not only affected by but affected social conditions. The numerous disruptions of a more or less serious nature in high schools across the nation toward the end of the decade met with responses which ranged from major program modifications and changes in relationships and environments to toughening up on security and the punishments meted out to transgressors against the school's authority.

Although the Vietnam war and the draft have ended, social problems--instability and disintegration of the family, teen-age suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse, perennial unemployment and underemployment, erosion of faith in government and leaders, delinquency and violent crime, moral crises, etc.-- have had a profound impact on youth and on the so-called youth culture. As the California RISE Commission observed: "Young people now are confronted with confusing and complicated social problems and turmoil that earlier generations never encountered. These situations have had a profound effect on today's youth and upon the attitudes and performance of young people in and out of school."[15]

During the 1960s, the questions of equality and inequality of educational opportunity were debated more vigorously than ever before. A plethora of programs were mounted to increase educational opportunities for minority groups and other disadvantaged persons at all levels. The proportion of persons possessing a high school diploma in the 25 to 29 aged group increased from 60 to 75 percent. College attendance grew from 3.6 to 8.5 million with the proportionate increase greatest among the blacks and other minority groups. Education and schooling were perceived

as important and efforts were made to open access to educational opportunities. In recent years, we have seen an almost complete reversal as resources for education have been reduced or curbed and as the need for schooling has been downplayed. Some revisionist historians described the explosive growth of the high school during the first half of the century as having been due solely to the need for satisfying industry's requirements for trained workers, skilled and semi-skilled. As budgets have been cut in public schools and colleges, educators have deplored these reductions but seem not to have recognized the significant and larger issue as to whether education has intrinsic worth and whether individuals are entitled to the fullest development of their potential, regardless of whether the economy is able to absorb them with their higher credentials. This constriction of access to educational opportunities--to the right to fullest educational development-- impacts on secondary and higher education and surely will influence the future of high schools and colleges.

It has been the poor and the otherwise disadvantaged who have benefited most from the open access and equal educational opportunity policy. It is they who will suffer most from a policy in which only those who can afford to attend will do so. It has been argued that the contribution of schools and colleges to upward social mobility is a myth. While the socioeconomic gap has not been closed, individuals and groups have improved socioeconomically through education and training and we should not be deluded by the prevailing rhetoric.

The question of whether or not to lower the age of compulsory attendance to 14 is related to the larger issue although the argument is

usually advanced on the basis of eliminating coercion of youth and making it possible for those youth who "damage the learning environment" (to quote the Brown report) to be removed from a setting where they impede the learning of their peers. No issue is more important than that of how society views the intrinsic value of and right to education and schooling of its members. Educators must confront this issue head on and not simply concern themselves with the reduction of resources and the downgrading of education as these affect their own jobs and territorial domains.

Addressing secondary school principals in February 1975, the then U.S. Commissioner of Education Terrel H. Bell posed two basic challenges facing secondary education. One was the need for restructuring "to accomodate young people who are more mature, more capable of responsibility, more willing to begin the transition to adulthood than any other generation." The second was for high school educators "to get back in touch with the community and its many institutions that can and should contribute to the education of the young."[16]

Writing in 1956 on the conditions and forces which had stimulated the then-current period of educational reappraisal, Cremin expressed the thesis that the sweeping changes underway "may well call for a new view of secondary education as different from the Cardinal Principles as were the Cardinal Principles from the ideas of the Committee of Ten."[17] In the past twenty years, there have been changes but whether they were as sweeping as Cremin believed they would be is questionable. The reports of the various commissions and panels each examine secondary education and the development of youth and base their recommendations for reform

on these analyses. They purport to move toward a new view of secondary education, one focusing on education of youth rather than on a single institution, the high school. There appear to be a number of common themes in the recommendations which-- if implemented-- would augur a different future for the high school.

1. The objectives of youth education are broad and encompassing. When the reports are explicit as to the objectives of youth education, they set forth aims which are more like those areas in the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education than statements limited to the acquisition of cognitive skills and knowledge. Such aims, however, are concerned with the education of youth and not to secondary schooling alone.
2. The high school does not and cannot provide a complete environment for youth education. The Coleman Report concluded that "the school system, as now constituted, offers an incomplete context for the accomplishment of many facets of maturation."[18] The Martin Report proposed "replacing the unattained concept of the comprehensive high school with a more practical goal of providing comprehensive education through a variety of means including schools."[19] The task of the high school, the Martin panel argued, should shift from one of teaching to one of arranging for delivery of services: "scheduling, evaluating, registering, monitoring and continuously communicating information on adolescent education."[20]
3. The age-segregation of youth must be overcome if they are to be provided a more complete environment for transition to adulthood. The Martin Report asserted that "in prolonging youth's dependence we have used our schools, inadvertently, as the social 'aging vats'

that have isolated adolescents and delayed their learning adult roles, work habits, and skills."[21] The isolation of adolescents could be reduced, the panel suggested, by the creation of community-based learning centers for youth and adults, separate from the high school, and the inauguration of programs involving joint participation of adolescents and adults who would together "learn by doing what is socially useful, personally satisfying, and health supporting for the individual and the community."

4. An effective education-work policy must be developed. The Martin Report proposed providing youth with real-jobs-with-real-work through a program which would emphasize job-knowledge, on-the-job training, occupational citizenship, and job placement. More radical proposals come from the Coleman Report which advocated testing programs including alternating school and work to provide a mixture of part-time work and part-time schooling in a variety of time cycles; reserving time within work organizations for formal instruction so that both adults and youth "would engage in a mixture of roles including learning, teaching, and work"; establishing youth communities and youth organizations in which adolescents would provide "most of the services, have most of the authority, and carry out most of the responsibility"; and creating work opportunities through federally-funded public service programs. The National Manpower Institute recommended developing the concept of career education more fully by "infusing the general education process with various forms of exposure to the meaning of work and service"; making actual work or service experience an integral part of all youth's education; and facilitating a student's moving

in and out of the educational sequence as it seems appropriate to the individual.*

5. The barriers to youth for work and service, in both law and custom, should be reexamined. Two reports proposed experimentation with a dual minimum wage, lower for young workers than for more mature ones. The National Manpower Institute advocated establishing a broad-based Community Education-Work Council.
6. Citizenship education should be moved into the larger community while, at the same time, it is developed in the school through excercise of students' rights and responsibilities. The Martin Report proposed that education for citizenship involve youth in social, political, and governmental agencies where they can practice citizenship skills with the experiences being supplemented by the academic study of the social sciences with their distinct methodologies and should include seminars and classes in which the community experiences are mediated. The Brown Report proposed that the exercise of due process rights of students would contribute to development of their citizenship skills.

---

* McGowan and Cohen observe that while "schools used to be regarded as a better way of preparing to work, work is now seen as a better way of preparing to learn . . . . The idea of career education is not to dispense with but to add to what schools currently do-- and to shift the focus to work." (pp.31-32) They argue work is not what reformers would like to believe: "A great deal of work seems to suffer from just the same defects that reformers bemoan in schools; indeed, at exactly the same time they are trying to liven up education by making it more like work, other reformers are trying to liven up the workplace to make it more humane, stimulating, and relaxed-- in a word, more like school." McGowan and Cohen view career education as a fantasy--" that schooling often impeded the preparation for life, and reduces the opportunity to find meaningful relationships with adults and to acquire economic and social skills."[22]

7. A variety of educational options and alternative programs should be provided both within and outside the school with public financial support for students exercising choice among the alternatives. The Task Force '74 Report suggested two categories of alternatives: one which includes the degree of structure, including use of space and allocation of time; the other includes curricular design and the student population serviced.[23] The Martin Report suggested that alternatives might include, but not be limited to, "mini-schools, schools-without-walls, open schools, alternative schools, optimal programs, internships, parallel courses, independent study, free schools, and apprentice and action learning."[24] The Brown Report saw the variety of alternatives "limited only by the legitimate needs of adolescents and the vivacity of the imagination of educational planners."[25] In fact, the report recommended that: "Every adolescent should, with proper guidance, be able to select those forms of schooling and learning most congenial to his basic learning style, philosophic orientation, and tastes."[26]
8. The range and kinds of nonformal educational opportunities should be expanded. The reports assert that the schools' obsession with credentialing and accreditation cause them to prefer formal education. Many of the alternative programs provide learning experiences in nonformal settings-- moving students out of the classrooms and into the community where they engage in experiential learning. The Brown report urged that schools recognize "that authentic learning can take place in a wide variety of settings, many of them remote from the schoolhouse" and that credit should

be given for both nontraditional and nonformal learning experiences.[27]

9. Compulsory attendance laws should be changed so as to lower the school-leaving age. Individuals should be offered alternatives to the conventional twelve-year schooling pattern. The Brown Report argues that earlier physical, sexual, and intellectual maturity mandates an option for earlier departure from formal schooling. Further, the Brown Report declares: "By the age of fourteen, a student who has not developed some motivation toward learning, is not likely to profit from compulsory schooling."[28]
10. Individuals should be provided with educational vouchers that could be used for a wide range of skill training as well as further education. The Brown Report proposes federal and state legislation which would entitle every citizen to fourteen years of tuition-free education, only eight of which would be compulsory. The remaining six years would be available to the individual for use at any stage of his life. The Coleman Report recommends the use of educational vouchers from age sixteen which would be the equivalent in value to the average cost of four years of college. Thus, the Coleman Report argues for placing the decision for further education and training in the hands of youth "who will themselves experience the consequences, and would likely encourage wiser management of one's affairs than do current institutions."[29]
11. Youth should be provided opportunities for furloughs, whereby they can move in and out of schools as appropriate. The National Manpower Institute recommends "a considered break" wherein the

student, with adequate counseling, would step out of the educational sequence for a year or two and then return, receiving credit for his out-of-school experience. The California RISE Commission advocated student furloughs "of flexible duration, of educational value to the learner, and consistent with the learner's educational needs and objectives" with credit being given the learner if he meets specified objectives.[30]

12. The learning and teaching resources of school and community should be integrated, not just for alternative programs but rather for the total educational process. Much learning takes place in the community or "real world." The Martin Report urges schools "to identify, obtain, and utilize fully and effectively those physical and human resources in the community that can contribute to achieving learning objectives."[31] Included in these resources are the family, the media, the museums, religious institutions as well as business, labor, industry, government, service agencies, and individual residents.
13. Secondary education should be designed as an integral part in a lifetime continuum of education, "alternating incidental and informal lifelong learning with more organized and intentional educational opportunities." The various proposals for broadly usable educational vouchers are aimed, in part, toward one kind of continuing education as is the notion of furloughs.
14. Flexibility in time sequences-- hourly, daily, weekly, and yearly-- should be provided so that youth can have the time needed for a particular kind of learning in which they are

involved. If community resources are to be utilized, standard high school periods are not possible and blocks of time appropriate to the activity need to be arranged. If secondary education is to take place in work settings, flexible time arrangements are required.

15. The size of the high school should be drastically reduced and its functions made more specialized. The Coleman Report suggests that high schools should have not more than 500 students and that each school should be genuinely specialized, including but not limited to academic specialites. Youth should be free to attend one or more such specialized schools simultaneously. Other reports urge the establishment of schools-within- schools, mini-schools, and alternative schools aimed at creating different kinds of environments from that found in the traditionally large high school.

16. The high school should accept responsibility for intellectual development of youth with other agencies and institutions taking responsibility for other kinds of development. Work, citizenship education, and aesthetic education are among the areas for which nonschool agencies would be given greater responsibility by the Martin Report which hoped "that the removal of non-academic fat will result in a needed lean and hungry devotion to the development of a maturing intellect."[32] That report suggested an academic day of two-to-four hours with every adolescent involved in one or more programs in settings away from the high school.

The various reports have other specific recommendations which deal with student and teacher accountability, school security, institutional

sexism and racism, and community involvement, among others. However, the common themes in the various reports provide a clearer picture of what is being advocated in the way of restructuring secondary education. The main purposes of secondary education are generally being reaffirmed but the functions of secondary schools are being questioned. Viewing the present-day high school as an overburdened, beleaguered institution, sometimes on the verge of collapse, the various panels and commissions have recommended that secondary educators, with community participation, assert leadership in the building of a system of youth education which uses more of the community's educative resources-- including those of the high school.

There are many educating and socializing agencies, some or many of which may be more influential than formal schooling in their developmental effects on youth. The reports propose reforming the schools by integrating the learning resources of school and community, by making available a wide variety of educational options and program alternatives to attain educational objectives, by involving the school in providing valid and meaningful work experiences for all, and by the school shedding some of its primary and ancillary functions.

What then of the future of the high school? Certainly it has a future although reform is in that future. As an institution, its entire history has been one of regular, periodic reappraisal. America's view of secondary education has been described as a "love-hate affair," sometimes approaching a high level of smugness with the accomplishments of the high school but simultaneously sharply critical of its failures and inadequacies. While there are general dissatisfactions with the

high schools and with adolescent education, generally neither citizens nor professionals are prepared to close them down and scatter youth into various community settings for their education and socialization. While acknowledging that career education is a central element in youth education and that it probably is done better outside of school, both industry and labor have already indicated their willingness to consult and advise but their resistance to finding work placements for millions of youth and to accepting responsibility for teaching which is beyond their normal production activities. McGowan and Cohen remind us that the pattern of the history of social reform in America has been one of proposing to loosen the boundaries between formal institutions and the larger society when these existing institutions seem inadequate, shifting responsibility from formal organizations to informal arrangements. They suggest that "in seeking to deal with the inadequacies of formal institutions, it might make sense to recognize the limitations of informal alternatives in this post-industrial world."[33]

Further, the recommendations of the various commissions and panels are based on certain assumptions and interpretation of data which may be inaccurate or incomplete. They seem to focus on that quarter of the youth population which is white, male, and middle class and neglect the minority groups, the poor, and females. They seem to have a unitary view of the 15,000 or so high schools across the nation, although they do single out large urban schools from time to time. They do discuss the "youth culture" but seem to view this culture as that which existed at the time the studies were being done-- late 1960s and early 1970s. Basic curricular questions are only vaguely addressed. And, the reports

do not deal with the prime residents of the high school-- students, staff, and parents.

There is little attention given to the life and the climate of the school, the intricate networks of social interaction involving individuals and groups which comprise the school's social system. The classrooms are but one part of that social system-- affected by the hierarchies and the exercise of power; by learning environments, structured and unstructured; and by the formal and informal transactions-- all of which exercise considerable influence on learning and socialization. Students are maturing earlier; they are more knowledgeable about some aspects of life, having been exposed to television and other media. Insights into the professional staff and teaching have raised questions about the existence of a sense of community and professional colleagueship as these affect learning. Attention to the school climate would well affect curriculum and instruction-- both in their formal and informal aspects. To the triad of learner, society, and knowledge on which curriculum was to be based as propounded in the Cardinal Principles, a fourth element needs now to be added-- the school as an institution with a life, a climate, and ongoing transactions of its own.

Hopefully, the new view of secondary education which is beginning to emerge from the various reports and recommendations will result in a high school which will be programmatically and organizationally more flexible. It will design curricula focusing on inquiry about, and skills and understandings for, dealing with personal and societal problems. It will provide a transition to adult roles by involving youth in increasing adult issues, problems, and responsibilities in both school and non-school

settings. It will not use staff as the prime transmitters of information since that function is done through other means but will stress their roles as the arrangers of the conditions for learning. It will serve as the core for youth education, the catalyst for arranging and mediating learning in optimal settings, whether in the school or the community. It will plan its teaching-learning processes so as to capitalize on and complement those learnings which youth acquire through other agencies and media which educate and socialize youth. It will attend to creating the kind of environment and social system in which aesthetic, social, and personal development occur through participation in the life of the school. It will concern itself with teaching students how to learn so that they will become self-directed, life-long learners.

The case for reforming and reshaping the American high school is being made once again. How real, how extensive, how significant the reform will be is still anyone's guess. Schools have changed since the Committee of Ten report, despite the rhetoric of the American high school as an unchanging and immutable institution. Schools changed slowly, sporadically, and quite unevenly. We have very few examples of dramatic reform-- witness the "era of curriculum invovation" of the 1960s when millions of dollars were spent in reforming curriculum and teacher education. Many of the changes which have occurred can be related to the committee and commission reports of the past. The Eight-Year Study did not result in America's high schools all reshaping themselves into the pattern of the thirty experimental schools, but elements of the study did become part of a good many schools.

While there is a great deal we do not know about the change

process, our insights and understandings have grown considerably during the past two decades as a result of research and development activities focusing on the management of change and innovation. Writing about changing the high school some thirty years ago, Caswell affirmed "the supreme importance of those working at the 'grass roots' in effecting change." We know well that grass roots change is slow.

What the current crop of reports can do, just as those which came before it, is to sensitize individuals and groups to the changing conditions and forces and to the urgency for change in the institutions and agencies concerned with the education of youth. The better reports do indeed call for a new view of secondary education or, at the very least, some new perspectives on the education of youth. It could well be that a combination of forces including better communication media, a press for community involvement and control, a youth population which differs from its predecessors, a new or at least different teaching profession, and better insights from the social and behavioral scientists could produce the conditions necessary for change being advocated. If so, the prospects for reforming secondary education are good-- or at least better than they have been at any time since we began shaping America's high schools. Surely the need for reform has been established.

REFERENCES

[1] A. Harry Passow, Secondary Education Reform: Retrospect and Prospect. The Julius and Rosa Sachs Memorial Lectures. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976.

[2] Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. Bulletin 1918, No. 35 Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918. p. 20.

[3] American Council on Education. Youth Tell Their Story. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1938.

[4] Galen Jones and Raymond W. Gregory. Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948. p. 15.

[5] Sidney P. Marland, Jr., "Career Education: A Report," in Conference Report on American Youth in the Mid-Seventies. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1972. pp. 5-6.

[6] B. Frank Brown, chairman, The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education. The Reform of Secondary Education. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973. p. 10.

[7] John H. Martin, chairman, National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education. Report of the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975. pp. 36-37.

[8] James C. Coleman, chairman, Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee. Youth: Transition to Adulthood. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974. p. 2.

[9] B. Othanel Smith and Donald E. Orlosky. Socialization and Schooling: Basics of Reform. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1975. p. iii.

[10] Maurice Gibbons. The New Secondary Education. Phi Delta Kappa Task Force Report. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1976. p. 1.

[11] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[12] Ronald Gross and Paul Osterman, editors. High School. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971. p. 14.

[13] "Ex-Students Pinpoint Wrongs in Nation's High Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 57, March 1976, p. 484.

[14] Martin, op. cit., p. 22.

[15] California Commission for Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education. The RISE Report. Sacramento, CA: California Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1975. p. xi.

[16] Terrel H. Bell, "The Principal's Chair: The Pivotal Seat in Secondary Education," address to Conference of National Association of Secondary School Principals, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 10, 1975.

[17] Lawrence A. Cremin, "The Problem of Curriculum Making: An Historical Perspective," Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, What Shall the High Schools Teach? Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1956. p. 25.

[18] Coleman, op. cit., p. 2.

[19] Martin, op. cit., p. 19.

[20] Ibid., p. 43,

[21] Ibid., p. 3.

[22] Eleanor F. McGowan and David K. Cohen, "'Career Education'-- Reforming School through Work," The Public Interest, Vol. 46, Winter 1977, pp. 28-47.

[23] John W. Porter, chairman, Task Force '74. The Adolescent, Other Citizens, and Their Schools. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975. p. xviii.

[24] Martin, op. cit., p. 44.

[25] Brown, op. cit., p. 101.

[26] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[27] Brown, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Coleman, op. cit., p.xxiv.

[30] California RISE Commission, op. cit., p. 11.

[31] Martin, op. cit., p. 132.

[32] Martin, op. cit., p. 60.

[33] McGowan and Cohen, op. cit., p. 46.